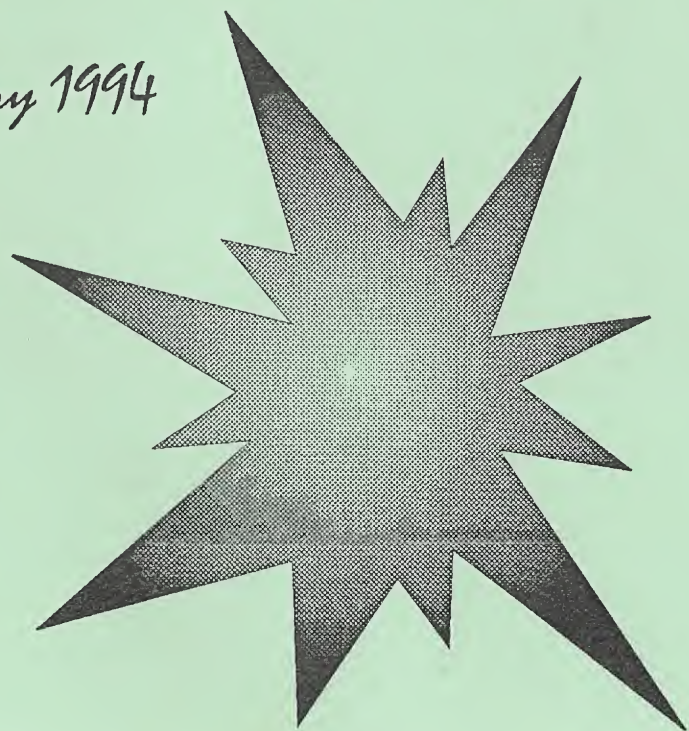


The SPARK!

Programme discussion bulletin

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ON THE WORK OF THE PROGRAM COMMISSION OF THE CPC

by York-Oakwood Club, CPC

The York-Oakwood Club recently began discussions of the Program Commission's outline for a new Party program which is to be finalised at a special convention in 1995. The following points represent a brief summary of the club's initial discussion.

1. Many questions in the programme outline are shallow and superficial.
2. We do not think the Party would be best served by strict adherence to the 1995 deadline. On a matter of such importance as a new program we believe we should take our time and ensure that the new program is both scientific and realistic.
3. A minimum requirement for the 1994 Party convention be a clear cut affirmation of the principles of Marxism-Leninism and democratic centralism and the organisational basis of the Party.
4. Some questions we feel are central to the discussion are:

- The world balance of forces: Does socialism still hold the historical initiative? What are the lessons to be learned from the collapse of many socialist countries?

The international movement is still examining these phenomena.

- New developments in imperialism: What is the role of the TNCs and what are the developments in imperialist groupings of countries and power blocs?

- Situation in Canada: Is the projection of an anti-monopoly alliance and government still relevant today? Concerning the national question, who is behind today's separatist movement in Quebec? Does our projection for two equal nations in a united Canada still hold water? Do the native peoples constitute a nation?

- Do we need a reassessment of social democracy?

- What is the role of the Communist Party as a vanguard organisation?

These and many other questions need lengthy discussion. Not least of all, we need interchange with other Communist Parties, including in the former socialist countries.

With all of the above in mind, we should be flexible as to deadline.

RETHINKING THE ROLE OF THE PARTY

by Dave B.

What we do now is determined by how we see ourselves (the Party) in the future society. I think that there is a common belief that we are now a small party which will eventually become a big party which will come to power and operate in the best interest of society. Now, isn't there a thread of liberalism in this line of thinking: a good party will come along and then everything will be put right?

I believe that our task is not to take power but to divest it. Our task is to reduce alienation to the point of its disappearance -- under Capitalism and under Socialism. Our task is not to come to power but to make the bodies in power respond to the needs of people. Our task is not to become Bob White or Brian Mulroney, but to make them do what the people want them to do. Our task is to anticipate what the working class wants,

then find ways how these wants can be achieved, and have the working class demand actions toward these goals.

This line of thinking and, consequently, of actions will fly in the face of all bourgeois propaganda and the notorious practices of the regimes of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Saying all of this is still not saying what we should do now. These ideas are to serve as the foundation upon which our actions will be based. What we do now is to be determined collectively. We ought to examine seriously the most fundamental ideas upon which our actions are based: why we even ought to exist at all.

Our task is to end alienation, to end powerlessness. In achieving our aim, we will eliminate the need for our existence; I estimate this will be in the year infinity.

The CP should not only be a Party organization but a new society.

MARXIST-LENINIST PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY

by Jim Sacouman

Over the last year, People's Voice readers have had ample access not only to stories and analyses of capitalism in crisis

and of severe problems in the revolutionary struggle for a socialist globe. Careful readers of the Voice have been presented

with substantial evidence from around the world of what thoroughgoing renewal can and should entail from a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist perspective and taking into account different historical-material circumstances.

Why is it that those Communist Parties that have most successfully been working out the meaning of the socialist debacle in Eastern and Central Europe have been Parties which have taken up, most completely, the banner of full democracy? What allowed those Parties to reassert readily their continuing commitment to Marxism-Leninism at the recent International Seminar on the Contemporary World Situation and the Validity of Marxism in Calcutta? Were they, perhaps, being right opportunists or left deviationists? Or were they expressing the central core of creative Marxism and Leninism?

The South African CP has, of course, for many decades played a leading role, autonomously and through the ANC, unions and other social movements, in the struggle against apartheid and for democracy for all South Africans. The Party supports formal-legal political democracy; it also centrally proclaims the necessity of moving towards economic, social and cultural democracy through the massively conscious efforts of workers and all oppressed.

Full support for economic, political, social and cultural democracy was made

central to the Portuguese CP's programme at the very same time that the Party militantly reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing democratic centralism in its internal workings. The Portuguese CP, of course, has led the struggle for a democratic Portugal since the successful fight against the dictatorial Salazar regime of twenty years ago. The Party is strongest and most popular precisely in those regions where the struggle has been most prolonged and harsh. In alliance with the Greens, the Party is regularly elected at the municipal and regional levels. It has attracted many of the best of the youth, of women, and of cultural workers.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has embedded itself in huge areas of the country. Where it is strongest it has consistently enhanced local and regional forms of political, economic, social and cultural democracy, despite conditions of immense impoverishment. As an expression of its continuing commitment to Marxism-Leninism and a socialist globe, the CPI(M), of course, organized the above-mentioned International Seminar.

The Cuban CP's rectification process began years before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since the collapse, that process has intensified and deepened despite/because of the increased economic hardships caused most directly by US imperialism. Central to the rectification process has been a reassertion of the importance of creating 'the new

human being' through intensifying economic democracy at workplaces, social democracy in communities and public works, cultural democracy in forms of expression, and political democracy at the local, provincial, and internal Party levels. Internally the Party has moved rapidly to incorporate young people, women and Blacks.

In Canada, too, our Party's strength has been its ability to take up, collectively and in concert, democratic struggles -- be those struggles for the economic and social rights of the unemployed, our internationalist contribution to the fight against fascism in Spain in the 1930s, or the most recent battle for democracy in our own Party against the liquidationist misleaders who were dictatorially going against the expressed will of more than 85% of the membership.

Now, what links the positive examples from Communist Parties in South Africa, Portugal, India, Cuba to our Party in Canada is certainly not similar historical-material conditions and circumstances. What these Parties regularly demonstrate for us is a common commitment to Marxism-Leninism, on the one hand, and an expressed and popularly perceived leadership in the struggle for profoundly democratic socialism, on the other hand. What these Parties have correctly confirmed is that full democracy was absolutely central to both Marx's and Lenin's critiques of capitalism and to their

proposals for transformation towards socialism and, eventually, communism.

One of the very few themes that weaves together the entirety of Marx's work was his central focus on the necessity and possibility of the revolutionary transformation of capitalist alienation/exploitation through the massive and massively conscious efforts of workers and their allies. 'Workers of the world' could unite in their own parties and organizations to begin, consciously and democratically, to defeat capitalism and build socialism and ultimately communism. In this sense the bourgeoisie's battered principles of liberty, equality and solidarity can be made real for all.

One of the most central (and centrally ignored) arguments of Lenin's writings, especially during the period of both Imperialism and State and Revolution, was his emphasis on the importance of soviets in workplaces and communities to begin the profoundly democratic task of building socialism. In that context, a vanguard party of militants committed to profound transformation was seen by Lenin as crucial given the immensity of the task and the vicious nature of imperialist capitalism. 'Workers of all countries and all nationalities' could thus democratically transform the highest stage of capitalist exploitation and oppression into the beginnings of a socialist globe.

For excellent reasons, both Marx and Lenin and all the Parties mentioned

previously have been highly critical of right opportunists mouthing democracy for their own bourgeois or petty bourgeois interests. From at least 1988 to 1992, our own Party experienced the self-proclaimed democratic spew of a misleadership that used entirely anti-democratic, bureaucratic manoeuvres within the Party to finance out of Party funds its own joint ownership and control of a 'left movement press' that pretends to be merely a mouthpiece for 'the movements' but which has no democratic means of either editorial or membership control.

Again for excellent reasons, both Marx and Lenin also argued against anarchist ultra-leftism that would move overnight from capitalist alienation/exploitation/oppression to a communist utopia of complete workers' control of workplaces, communities, households, and bodies. The Cuban CP in particular has had to constantly be aware of this anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist, seemingly leftist trend in order to sustain its revolutionary process through the current imperialist capitalist onslaught.

The point is that never did Marx, Lenin, or any of the current Leninist parties react to the real threats from the right and the 'left' by denying that full democracy is what socialism makes possible and that full democracy within socialism is what the parties are committed to. Indeed, many current Leninist parties have, at least arguably, incorporated the fullest

programmes of economic, social, cultural and political democracy available; they are increasingly recognized among workers and all oppressed in their own countries as steadfastly upholding these programmes.

As we move towards our next convention, our Party should also resolutely examine both its constitution and its programme to debate and change those sections which do not yet facilitate internal democracy and democratic-centralist decision-making within the Party and which do not set the Party on the path of playing a leading role in the struggle for a fully democratic socialist Canada. Out of utter necessity, we have made defensive changes in our Constitution that have brought the leadership back under the control of the membership. But much more has to be done positively to project ourselves as leading the struggle for full democracy at all levels.

By our creative development of Marxist-Leninist theory, by our rigorous commitment to replace that economic, political, social and cultural system of alienation, exploitation and oppression known as capitalism with full socialist democracy, and by our developing practice of taking on the democratic struggles of all the alienated, exploited and oppressed from our internationalist, workers' perspective, our Party can become uniquely situated to attract the most militant battlers for a new world. No other party

or organization-movement has our vantage and advantages. No other party or organization-movement has our complete disdain for capitalism and our commitment

to profound transformation in a step-by-step and, therefore, meaningful, consciously concerted fashion.

THE PARADIGM: A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING OR A BARRIER TO PROGRESSIVE THOUGHT?

by George A. McKnight

Lately the word paradigm has come into use, mainly among scientists so far. A paradigm describes a system of thinking which we all have in our mental makeup and through which we filter incoming information to determine whether it is factual or logical. Based on this paradigm we determine whether to accept new information, analyze it, understand it and add it to our personal paradigm. Often, correct information is rejected out of hand without regard to whether or not it reflects the current reality in the constantly changing and developing state of flux. It is rejected not because it does not reflect reality but because it doesn't fit the paradigm of the individual involved. The thought that the paradigm might be wrong often does not even enter the picture.

Some people have a system of ideas that are inflexible and they almost automatically reject any new idea out of hand, becoming absolutely fixed and closed to new ideas altogether, no matter whether

or not the new ideas reflect changes taking place in the objectively developing world around us. Others are too ready to accept new ideas altogether and do so without adequate investigation and analysis. Thus, over time they are unstable as they flit from idea to idea, having no firm opinion on anything. The correct approach is somewhere in the middle between these two extremes.

For communists, who are or should be guided by the science of dialectical and historical materialism, both extremes are wrong and harmful. On the one hand, those whose paradigm is inflexible become dogmatic and soon lose touch with ever changing and progressing reality. On the other hand, those who change their mind too quickly and without sufficient thought and analysis lose the ability to stick to a correct idea and drift around like a ship without a rudder.

The individual paradigm is a matter between the individual and reality. If

one's paradigm is closed to new ideas, to understanding objective reality, it is only that individual's knowledge which is affected. of course if the individual is in a position to influence others, then it becomes a more serious matter. In this case the paradigm of the individual can result in a collective paradigm.

The collective paradigm is far more difficult and dangerous and is not so easily changed. If the collective paradigm becomes out of touch with and refuses to accept the constantly changing and developing reality, if it refuses to change with the reality, it becomes paralysed; it soon becomes a dogma and developing reality quickly passes it by. This is what happened to the communist movement; its effects are there for all to see in the collapse of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

In the communist movement over many years the collective paradigm became paralysed and it became impossible to change it, to free it from its paralysis. The reason for this is the misuse of the principle of "Democratic Centralism". The misapplication of this principle consists in using it in the field of theory and ideology rather than in the field of organization for which it is applicable and was intended. the fallacy here is that the majority is more likely to be right, more so than the individual in terms of correct theory, i.e., the understanding of reality. It is not the opinion of the majority which

decides correctness in theory and ideology, but how closely the theory and ideology reflect objective reality.

The majority are not and, in practice, never have been students of philosophy, theory or ideology. They are interested in practice, in the immediate political and economic problems, and do not bother poring through books and studying what is for them the dry and boring problems of theory and ideology. The result has been a neglect, or in fact abandonment, even contempt for theory and ideology. just at the time when the most drastic and far reaching objective changes are taking place in the history of the world. In fact, it has gone so far that many members of the party, some in leading positions for many years have shown this contempt for theory by abandoning ideological education altogether, relying almost exclusively on practice to find a way forward. They even abandoned our theoretical publications and ideological schools. What we have done by this is to find our way backward almost to oblivion.

Now we have no program, no generally agreed understanding of the way forward, except some vague, generalized idea about a future socialism which we hope to build some day. But socialism is and can only be a society governed in line with social science based upon dialectical and historical materialism which most of our members, by far the majority, have never studied and have

only a vague idea as to its meaning let alone its practical application.

We have the problem of developing a program for the party and the country in circumstances we never thought we would ever see. The collapse of the Soviet Union which we all thought was the wave of the future, the split and virtual disintegration of the CPC, and the crisis in almost every communist party places upon us a great responsibility. We will make no progress in this unless we abandon the old practice oriented paradigm and adopt a new one based upon the science of dialectical and historical materialism, understood and applied as the basis for the analysis needed for such development.

To quote Hans Heinz Holz:

"Theory is an indispensable and

independent motive force of practice...

Whoever would act powerfully must have a powerful theory... After a lost battle, we must begin our political work again in a small and modest way... Work on consciousness belongs to the beginning: the formation and strengthening of class consciousness, conceptual power in analysing the tendencies of our age, unsparing criticism of past and present mistakes, discipline in thinking and as a consequence organizational unity."

[NST, 5(3)]

Let us heed this advice and get on with the theoretical work which must be done to lay the theoretical foundation and understanding upon which, and only upon which, we can develop a sound political program for the CPC and for Canada.

THE INDUSTRIAL CORE OF THE WORKING CLASS

by Danny Goldstick

On the basis that the industrial working class is "the decisive core of the working class", we often have theoretically worried whether its proportional share in the working class as a whole, if not its absolute number, has been shrinking. But that will have to depend, of course, on what we are going to mean by the phrase "industrial working class".

Just who are the industrial workers?

Without some idea of which workers count as industrial workers and which workers count as nonindustrial, any talk about their numbers or proportions is meaningless.

It is not as if we clearly know that we all mean exactly the same thing in speaking of the "industrial workers".

Are industrial workers:

(1) workers in "smokestack industries"?

(2) manual workers?

(3) workers whose mode of labour is highly organized and collective?

(4) workers whose labour creates surplus value?

(5) workers engaged in the "material production" of goods rather than services?

(6) workers who could conceivably "shut the economy down" in a general strike?

Or what? These different answers certainly do not all come to the same thing. There are plenty of manual workers outside of the smokestack industries (and non-manual workers in them). Transport and communications workers mostly work in the service sector of "nonmaterial" production, but their participation would certainly be essential to "shutting the economy down".

Who are the industrial workers? I think the right answer is number (3). Marxism holds that industrial capitalism is doomed because of the basic contradiction in it between, on the one hand, the social character of the industrial forces of production (workers and the means of production) and, on the other hand, the continued private appropriation of the product. Why should that doom capitalism? Because it unavoidably produces

recurrent crises (depressions, wars, etc.) and at the same time, above all, produces what the Communist Manifesto calls capitalism's "grave-diggers", the Industrial Working Class. It is the first mass class of the oppressed in history imbued by its daily work experience at the point of production with a collectivity and discipline enabling its members to act together effectively on behalf of their common interests -- when they see the need -- up to the point, in a revolutionary crisis, of taking the country over, together with their class allies.

The industrial workers are the natural leaders ("vanguard") of mass movements of the oppressed and exploited, up to and including revolutionary take-over, because of their superior capacity of collectivity and discipline in action. It is accordingly the industrial workers, in this sense, who are the easiest to organize, and potentially the most powerful in organized mass action. In Karl Marx's words:

"Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital ... grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of production itself."
(Capital, Vol. I, Chapter 32)

The two most serious alternatives to (3) here would no doubt be (6) and (4). As for (6), a general strike might play a key role in the process of socialist revolution in Canada, but it has not yet played a decisive role in any other country's socialist revolution, and in only a few socialist revolutions has it played any major role at all. In fact, the general strike has never been the key point in Marxism's theory of socialist revolution. In any case, service workers in communications or "non-productive" workers in banking might well be better placed to shut the capitalist economy down by strike action than, say, manufacturing workers in the automobile industry. What is key is differences in collectivity and discipline between different groups of workers.

However, the collectivity and discipline of the workers in the production process is a matter of degree, making any statistics difficult. And modern technological changes sometimes increase and sometimes decrease the collectivity and discipline of the work force. Typing pools with computerized word-processing are surely more industrial, in the sense of collectivity and discipline, than individual typists working under separate bosses. But "work-teams" are probably at least a little less industrial, in this sense, than are assembly lines. The general overall long-term tendency surely has in the main been to increase greatly the industrial character of wage-labour.

In Marx's day, white-collar wage workers tended to be few in numbers, relatively privileged, and almost entirely individual, rather than collective, in the manner in which their work was organized. Today almost all of that has changed, but our thinking has only partly caught up with the changes.

There is, lastly, the sub-category of workers whose labour actually creates surplus value. The ruling class of the capitalist system is indeed based on the private profit-making sector of the economy, but it surely does not follow that it is just the workers there -- the "productive workers", in the parlance of classical political economy -- who alone make up the "decisive core" of the working class. Marx ridiculed any idea of attaching deep class significance to the distinction between "productive" and "non-productive" workers as such, pointing out, for example, that teachers in a profit-making private school do create surplus value for their employer -- while other teachers, of course, do not (Theories of Surplus Value, Part I, page 411).

Can anybody explain why CP Rail workers belong to the "decisive core" of the working class while CN workers do not? To be sure, as a matter of economic analysis, only the former create value in their work. To those who argued that even, say, government employees could be seen as contributing indirectly to the creation of value, Marx replied in effect

that perhaps they could, but then so also, for example, could common criminals whose activities undoubtedly create opportunities for the publishers of law books and the manufacturers of padlocks, etc. (T.S.V., I, 387-8)!

All in all, there would appear to be good grounds for concluding that, when it

comes to economic and political class action, the industrial workers are indeed the "decisive core" of the working class, but not at all for drawing the conclusion that the size of the industrial working class has fallen as a proportion of the working class as a whole.

ATTACKING THE DECK: THE STREAMING OF WORKING CLASS KIDS IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS (Our Schools/Our Selves, 1992)

Reviewed by Ruth Weir

The book, Stacking the Deck, is well documented in so far as it discusses the present state of affairs. What the book fails to do is to base its findings on an analysis of society, and to take into account the dramatic transformation of technology which has occurred since the second world war and its impact on education. This technology, if used for the welfare of society, could greatly enrich the lives of all people. Left in the present owners' hands, the profits are being used to buy up and create more profits.

This new technology threatens to displace even the middle class which has previously benefited from education. It places on the agenda the need for an

education which (if the profits are so used) will enable people to pursue many interests during a life-time. Automation places social revolution on the agenda. For life in such a society, every person requires a well rounded education.

This publication aims not at revolution but at reforming the present system. The role of 'child centred' education, which was introduced in 1937 and now controls the educational system, is not considered. Rather, although the majority of illiterates spawned by child-centred education are precisely working class, the authors dismiss traditional education methods and propose a vague alternative to patch up a system which is

no longer viable. An example is their failure to look at de-streaming (capitalist style) with a critical eye. This de-streaming would begin in Grade 9, at which point lack of elementary standards and effective remediation will ensure that working class students (and an increasing number of middle class children) will lack the skills and knowledge to be successful in high school and university.

This book lacks the analysis that

takes into account that the means of production determines social relationships. Automation, it can be argued, demands high education for all and, as Radwansky proposes, all young people, if immediately given assistance, can finish high school.

The process which is presently taking place in our schools will lead to Marcuse's conclusion -- a huge mass of poor and a few elite in a fascist-like state.

Notes: